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Why "America First"?

The Basis of Our Patriotism

Francis X. Reilly, S. J.

CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY
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WHY "AMERICA FIRST?"

I can find no more fitting expression of sentiment to sound the note of this occasion than the words of our chief executive:

"America now speaks with the great volume of the heart's accord, and the great heart of America has behind it the supreme moral force of righteousness and hope and the liberty of mankind", One in faith, one in patriotism, one in fellowship, inspired by the idealism of our Republic and convinced that the issue of the ordeal through which we are passing rests upon our prevision and singleness of purpose, we may well pledge ourselves anew to bring the war to a close in victorious peace, even if it exhaust our vast resources and take all the valiant lives in the United States of America. It has been brought home to us, aye, branded on our very souls by enemy conquest and kultur, as seen in enemy war practices, that, if the deliberate and calculated barbarism of those leagued against us, should gain the ascendant and triumph over the civilized world, the priceless heritage of free government would be swept from the earth, and the future of the race would be the darkest epoch of its history.

The records of the past go to show that military despotisms have ever been the supreme evil of human society; when, however, jingoism joins forces with material progress and barbaric ruthlessness, it becomes all the more dangerous, and all the more hateful. With all the gravity and calm dignity which a conscientious executive has at his command, we are told that for us the day of final test has come; but we are assured that we will win, that the issue is worth the brave lives and all the treasure

the war will cost. As the preserver of peace and the guardian of civilization, we as a nation are summoned by the God of battle and the God of nations to do our full share in the emancipation of man. The summons is to the heroic in us. It is our task under God, and we, the eldest born of freemn, assume it willingly, courageously in the cause of right and justice.

This is no time to fire the imagination. It is imperative for us to follow in calm reason the way of truth, justice and right with fidelity and courage. The war has put upon us grave responsibilities, neither anticipated nor foreseen. There are obligations to be met; there are questions that demand an answer. In honor and in conscience, we are bound to keep the covenants we have made. The lofty moral purpose that fires the spirit of America today, resting upon the broad principles of representative free government, will keep alert and true the best characteristics of our people. If duty determines destiny, and our duty is as clear as it is imperative, ours is a high and noble destiny. It is not for us to foretell the outcome; that is beyond our vision; but as we can see how the hand of Providence guided us through the crises of the last hundred years and more by reason of our fidelity to His law, so in this our day will He make issue for us, if we but hearken to the voice of authority, which rules by His will and which under His guidance will bring us to the goal of our hopes—peace with victory.

Too much insistence cannot be laid upon the fact that the result of the present crisis depends largely upon individual public spirit. It is your affair and my affair and a very serious problem. In the stress of activities for the successful conduct of the war, there is danger of our losing sight of the fact that our government is founded on the idea of equal individual manhood and equal individual responsibility. In the minds of our fathers the individual was the one element to be taken care of; "the sole business of government was to give him the rights of civic manhood, to protect him in his personal freedom and otherwise to leave him alone". This policy seems to have worked well in those days, due to the quality of manhood, and

to the sense each had of his innate dignity and of his personal responsibility to the state. There were no forces forever guiding, supporting, directing, providing for him, telling him what he might or might not, ought or ought not do. He was neither a moral nor an intellectual cripple. To the idea of the manhood of man, of a government formed to protect him in his rights, leaving him free in his actions and his mode of thought, we owe it that we are the nation we are.

If there has been a departure from this principle on the part of the government, is it because the citizen has lost his sense of individual dignity, lost his grasp on his relations and responsibility to the government? Can it be that the original American idea has been modified with time by influences that are alien, nay, hostile to the fundamental principles of American institutions? This is *our* government, *our* country, and when there is a question of preference, when it is America or some other country, it is and must be *America first.* We are the last to call in question the hearty love and veneration that another may have for his native land. We know that it is natural and entitled to respect. Moreover, we have always respected it. We have a right to expect, however, nay, we demand that native sons, as also men who have sworn allegiance to the United States, never forget for a moment that this Republic, on questions involving peace and war, commands absolute subordination of any and all political interests to the interests of the United States.

Much is left to the individual, to his sense of duty, to his patriotism; for the one thing to be said of our system is that it is *free.* "It is the production of men of practical business, of experience, of wisdom, and is suited to what man is, and to what it is in the power of good laws to make him". Its power is the power of the nation; its will, the will of the people. Such as it is, it is the result of our deliberate study and choice. It was not revealed to us, nor dictated to us, nor taught to us by doctrinaries, nor foisted upon us at the point of the bayonet. Framed by our fathers for themselves and their children, it

was purchased by American valor; not "a transient glimmering ray shot from the impulse of passing resentment", but a valor that for seven long years braved every hardship and fought an unequal fight against the might of imperial England. That noble struggle, the inspiration of later times, was even less remarkable than the battles which won for us in deliberative assembly the constitution of the United States, a constitution whose characteristic quality is its recognition of the individual, and the part he plays in successful government. We live, thanks to them, "under the only government framed by the unrestrained and deliberate consultations of the people", the first of its kind in the history of the world. It is your government and my government. Upon us depends its stability. Upon our moral worth, our attachment, our fidelity in every detail, rests its honor, its greatness, its future. Ours is a duty of justice and gratitude. "Our country fosters our dearest interests and protects our hearths and altars. We share in her development and prosperity; we thrive under her guarantee of safety to life and property". Ours is her heritage of wisdom; ours is the resplendent glory of her name written in letters of gold across the fairest pages of the world's history. Justice and gratitude tell us in no uncertain terms what return we must make for what she has done for us. Justice demands the last full measure of devotion; gratitude, the best we can offer.

Apart from gratitude, apart from the idea of justice, duty to such a country as ours we base upon a deeper principle. We believe that when she calls upon us, it is by right divine; for she has received the authority needful for her life, her work, her mission. With us, next to God is country; next to religion is patriotism; God and country is our watchword. The love of country, because it is God's law, goes hand in hand with our religion. In view of the work allotted to us by Him, who rules the destinies of nations, we realize that His purpose must be our purpose, and that only through loyalty to those who under Him guide the Ship of State, will His purpose for the future generations of freemen be accomplished.

As educated, patriotic citizens, we know our duty; we know the attitude of the Church towards the Republic today, as always. She has taught us to give our unqualified, whole-hearted support and loyalty to the United States, to cherish an enlightened, generous patriotism, to labor to consecrate this vast land of teeming millions to the honor of God for the welfare of man, that the song of the freemen, blending with the hymns that ascend like incense from the sanctuary, may rise in one paean of majestic melody, a song of praise and thanksgiving worthy of the God of nations, worthy of the freeborn people of United America.

In love of country, in loyalty to its life and well being we cannot be outdone. Our love is strong; our love is enduring; our loyalty so disinterested that we shrink from no labor, we stop at no sacrifice. We venerate the spirit of our people and our institutions; we cherish the spirit of freedom, the spirit of '76 and '61, because it is the very life of our national existence and honor, the cause of our development, the bulwark of our safety. Today we live by that spirit, the spirit of intense single-hearted loyalty. Today that spirit is ours in all its significance, in all its heroic nobility, for ours are minds that appreciate, ours are hearts that are generous.

In this supreme hour, the country we love, she who is set as the hope of nations in travail, is calling upon the devotion of her myraid sons and daughters, asking them for the active, intense, unwearied patriotism that shows itself in deeds, in sacrifice; a patriotism that grasps the situation *as she sees it,* and is willing to put the welfare of the nation above every personal consideration, to throw down the gauntlet to death itself that the nation may live. We who take a legitimate pride in our citizenship, who deem it the greatest honor and the highest dignity possible to man as man, we have but one answer: *"To the very end"*. Our country as the land of human dignity, of human liberty, where government may be likened to the Providence of the Most High, whose minister she is,—our country is the crowning glory of our race, the embodiment of the spirit of

human liberty in its struggle for the aggrandizement of man. Here alone is manhood the sole condition of the gift of civil liberty; here alone is found the recognition of men's greatness and dignity; here, at last is *realized* the haunting dreams of the race for six thousand years—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

Liberty, our pride and boast, is impossible without order, and order demands government. Without conviction of its legitimacy and the obligation of obedience to its mandates government is futile. Civil authority is but a natural means to a natural end. It is by no convention, no compact or contract that authority says to a man "do this or do not do that". "The point fixed by nature and by God is that there must be authority existent under some form, and under that form obeyed. Civil authority is the moral power to command. It is from God, not be revelation or divine institution, but by the fact that God is the author of nature. Nature requires that civil authority be set up and obeyed; what nature absolutely requires or forbids, God, the author of nature, must command or forbid, since nature is the expression of His will". Obedience, then, is a moral duty, not a physical necessity. The right to govern and the duty to obey are correlative; one cannot exist without the other.

"The nation as a moral unit, that is, as distinguished from the citizens taken distributively, is sovereign; but the people taken distributively owe allegiance to and are bound to obey the enactments of the government, since it governs by divine right. This fact confirms the people's rights by the highest sanctions, and at the same time commands them to obey the laws for conscience sake. The whole people is sovereign; the government legitimate and sacred; the nation, as a moral unit, makes the laws; the people, as individuals, are held to obey them".

Human government rules by the authority of God, not by its own. Its right to rule is God's right. It receives its power as a trust. The citizen therefore is bound to obey in as far as God authorizes it. This asserts a solid basis for liberty and provides for the stability of Government and the good order

of society. As we are bound to obey God, we are bound to obey the state as the minister of God. The law binds in conscience because legitimate government exists by divine appointment and has the right to make laws. For the reason that we are bound in conscience to obey God, we are bound in conscience to obey the Law. "By Me kings reign and lawgivers decree just things". "Let every soul be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God". When, then, the country declares war, the war is the law of the land, and binds the subjects to the same extent and for the same reason as any other law. It is a question of the obligation of the citizen to obey the law. So far as he is bound to obey the law, he is bound on his allegiance to render the service or the aid which the government commands, and to render it in the form which it specifies. There is no option. "The generative and conservative principle of political institutions is divine Providence".

"Constitutions are sacred so far as they are written in the hearts, habits, manners, customs of a people; they are the living soul of the nation, that by virtue of which it is a nation, able to live a national life and perform national functions. Governments fall not for want of physical force, but because of the lack of moral support on the part of the citizens". Loyalty is of first importance to the life of a democracy, loyalty built on a sense of sacred duty. True, affection and interest play their part; but affection when not founded on principle and sustained by a sense of duty is a wayward, fickle thing. As to interest, it, too, is variable, for men mistake their true interests. "Views change as to where interest lies, and interests veer with age, pursuits and social conditions". As treason is a crime, so loyalty is the highest, noblest, most generous of human virtues. "It is the human element in that sublime altruism which the apostle tells us is the fulfillment of the law." It has in it the principle of devotion and self-sacrifice that make man most Christlike. Where this spirit is rife, where it animates a na-

tion, there is nothing great, generous or heroic of which a loyal people is not capable.

The sentiment that binds a man to the land of his birth is as universal as it is natural; as unreasoned as it is impossible of analysis. In varying degrees, in every age, apart from any conscious design to foster or develope it, attachment to and love of country exists everywhere. It is the thread of the story that winds its way through the records of tribes and peoples and races; it is the inspiration of the bards, the theme of the deathless song of national poetry. Patriotism is not the glow of soul that rises from the contemplation of signal natural advantages,—the beauty, fertility, power, prosperity of the country, the sources of enjoyment or the means of advancement it affords. Be it what it may, bleak or balmy, north or south, sterile or fruitful, the tendency to cling to it, to glorify or idealize one's native land is as common as it is creditable to those who love it. Like other human ties it is modified by influences like character, culture, religion and the political institutions to which it owes allegiance. In remote times and at low stages of civilization, while it may evince intensity of devotion, individual loyalty or loyalty to an individual, it lies too close to the instinct of self-preservation and to blind partisanship to take rank as the virtue of patriotism. Loyalty to country, however, is the essence of patriotism; even in its lowest stages, it is a noble thing in itself, and worthy of men.

"Patriotism as an enlightened principle springs from the soil of a broad culture and from the civilization which real culture induces". Culture implies high moral principles and lofty social aims. These constitute a country's greatness; by these alone it flourishes. Material wealth, arts, literature, science, valuable and effective in their way and in their proper sphere, are not the index to a nation's standing. With them a country may be on the decline; fair to the eye, but with the principle of dissolution active in its vitals. "A country is gauged by the depth of its wisdom; by the hold that religion, virtue, freedom, the pillars of civilized society, have upon its

people''. Where these are, we find true patriotism, namely the embodiment in her sons of the enlightened principles of devotion and service based upon a sense of moral right and duty.

The test of a country's worth is the quality of the men it produces. Where devotion to country is grounded upon moral conviction and love of God-given freedom, we find the patriot, men who live in the affection of their fellows because of their exalted moral worth. Consecrated to a mighty work ''they were men of conviction, of tempered zeal, of energetic personality, of exalted principle''; they met the test, proved their worth and enriched the country and the age that summoned them to its service. Their title to respect, to veneration, is their intrinsic excellence, for their names are synonymous with noble deeds, and manly virtues.

The mere mention of such men as our beloved Washington and the great-hearted Lincoln lifts us above the dead level of common existence, stirs our better selves within us, until we resolve that these men shall not have lived for us in vain. The lives of patriots are of more value to the civic welfare of the nation that produced them, than all the material wealth and prospects it can boast. Time has flung a shadow over all save their splendid lives, and sent into oblivion their little world of men and events; yet in heightening their noble isolation, time has bequeathed to us a deathless inheritance. We are apt to grow unmindful of the harrowing circumstances of the times in which their lot was cast, the dark days and foreboding when their hearts grew faint and all but failed; yet, human even as we, they had to suffer and be strong. Their deep-rooted faith kept their vision clear and their determination fixed; and in the darkest hour the God of destiny favored them with a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.

Through the heartening influence of the lives of the patriots of old, we are ready to act and to suffer if need be for the cause of civilization and humanity. We can leave *all* to battle for the right, for principles that live close to the heart of freemen; we

can make light of life, if the alternative be the threatened loss of liberty. The loyalty we owe our country, is the loyalty we owe to honor and to God. "With enlightened and unreserved devotion, with the full consent of our higher nature, from the honest promptings of noble sentiment", we pay the greatest tribute a man can offer—"*All* and to the end". "To defend by force of arms the honor, the independence, the existence of our country, is a fundamental, a sacred duty; but it must be dominated by the spirit of justice and philanthropy" and be consistent with our relations to our enemies as to our allies. Times that try men's souls come but once in a lifetime. It is then especially that the citizen is bound to meet his obligations to the country that shelters him and pay them in full either with his property or with his blood. When the dark days come and danger threatens, as it does today, the patriot is at his post, one with his government in thought, word, deed, ready to act his part in the capacity that his country requires.

We may reckon our duty to our country in her hour of trial by the unnumbered blessings which God through her has bestowed upon the least of us. From him to whom much has been given much shall be required. According to the number and the splendor of the gifts which nature and our forebears have bequeathed to us, shall we be judged by the generations to come. They shall know that we were set as a beacon of hope and bright promise to all the nations of the world, and their verdict will be just because based on the findings of unerring time. Never has a nation been so favored as we have. Range round the whole world, north temperate or south temperate zone and show me 3,000,000 square miles that are in any way comparable. See this vast country set in the fairest portion of the new world, amidst mighty waters that temper all the winds that blow, with mineral wealth untold and lands that might feed the world! Here are the wonders of nature, here vast inland lakes, and a network of majestic rivers that bear her argosies to the encircling seas. Here, a puissant race, a nation 100,000,000 strong dedicated to liberty; here the sacred guarantee of life, liberty

and the pursuit of happiness with the means thereto, education and equal suffrage.

Set in the wilderness, on a bleak and storm-swept coast three hundred years ago, in 150 years we grew to such stature that we measured our might with the might of the mother countty—and we prevailed. A hundred years ago, we were an experiment, a handful of colonies stretched along the Atlantic; today we occupy the place of honor among the nations of the world, the arbiter of the fate of humanity and civilization; we are the source of the world's supplies, for we rival in every species of wealth, the combined resources of the rest of the world. Please God, we will be worthy of our privileges. Upon us rests the responsibility of living up to the principles through which and by which our prosperity has accrued to us as a nation and upon which our future and the future of the world depends. Ours is a high and noble destiny. We are to make love of country one with sincere love of fellow-man and his real interests, giving to the world a concrete compelling argument that we recognize the brotherhood of man as we admit the fatherhood of God.

Here, beneath the flag, the symbol of all for which we as freemen stand, the embodiment of all we love; here under the egis of freedom's banner, wherein the red of American heroism blending with the white of unflinching faith and loyalty waves midst the unclouded blue of hope and peace in starlit glory; here, America, we pay thee our tribute of love and loyalty. With hearts that are pledged to thee, we do thee homage. Thy fair name is our pride and boast; thy matchless glory our inspiration. In thy keeping is our hope, the future of the human race. For thy mission is to show the world, to convince them that dwell in the outer darkness, that man, even as we, is fit for the highest civil and political freedom. Through thee, thy example and thy aid shall the light of liberty be shed across this night of darkness, and the cause of mankind as man, triumph over all the world, because we, thy sons, have taken up this

work, have put our hands to the plow, not to rest, not to look back, *"till the very end"!*

America:

"Humanity with all its fears
With all the hopes of future years
Is hanging breathless on thy fate.

* * * * * *

Our hearts, our hopes are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee, *are all with thee!"*

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